

MY LAST DAYS WITH BA'BA'

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The Indian land troops caused widespread damage to a caravan of Pakistan tanks on the Khemkaraii sector in West India. The plight of the Pakistani tanks reminded one of the miserable condition of Karna of the Mahabharata with his chariot, stuck into the mud, while faced with formidable foes in front. The Indian Army had decisively occupied the vast Noryachar area in Sind. The Pak President, General Ayub Khan was facing a serious crisis in his political career. To find a way out, he earnestly entreated Russia to intervene and invite Indian Prime Minister, Lai Bahadur Shastri to attend a peace-conference to be held in Russia with Russian mediation. Mr. Shastri had to acquiesce. The heads of three states-India, Pakistan and Russia met at Tashkhunt in Russia to discuss peace proposals. Under the pressure from Russia, a tri-partite conference adopted certain resolutions which Mr. Shastri knew quite well that the Indian Parliament would refuse point-blank to ratify. The story goes that Mr. Shastri died of heart-attack. His mortal body was flown back to India.

BA'BA' told me to write an obituary in memory of the departed Prime Minister and get the same published in our Samgha Journals. He told me to prepare the draft and read it out to Him.

Accordingly, I drafted the obituary in about ten sentences and went to read out the same to Him. He heard the draft. He appreciated the draft and gave me the permission for its publication. I vividly remember one sentence. I wrote, 'Mr. Shastri died in harness i.e. Mr. Shastri died in the midst of work?', BA'BA' remained silent for a while and then said in continuation, "Look, my philosophy is a little different, I don't think it is not glorious enough to the while working. In philosophical parlance this is called Karma-Sadhana.

I would rise one step higher. Many people die in harness, that is, they die in the midst of work. My philosophy is-people must go on working even while dying. This is called Karma-Yoga. I want that people should follow the path of Karma-Yoga and not Karma-sadhana. Yes, this was the secret of BA'BA's philosophy of life. He kept Himself meticulously engaged in Karma-Yoga and guided His countless devotees along the same path to the last moment of His life (21st October, 1990).

I would like to say something about my last days with BA'BA'. For about long thirty years I had ample opportunities to come in His contact and act under His loving guidance. Except for a ten month-stint in Kerala, 1962 and almost a similar period in 1966-67 in West Bengal, I spent the remaining twenty eight years in the Central Office. I was attached to the Education Department of the Marga.

To prepare the syllabus and manuscript of school text books, print books, control examinations, give classes to Tattviks and Acaryas and to edit magazines were my main responsibilities. But, since 1978, after Marga Guru's release from Patna Central Jail, after being acquitted of all the charges by the Patna High Court's verdict, I started taking dictation from Marga Guru on various important subjects of social and cultural interests and translating them in English and Hindi languages.

From 1978 to 1990, Rev. Marga Guru wrote a large number of monumental books on a bewildering varieties of subjects at an inconceivable speed. It is doubtful whether any other intellectual in the world has written so many books on so many diverse topics with such undisputed authority in such an incredibly short period.

For instance, during the twelve years the Rev. Marga Guru wrote most valuable books on society, culture, civilization, etc., such as Namah Shivaya Shantaya (350 pages), Namami Krs'na Sundaram (300 pages), Liberation of Intellect-Neo- humanism (120 pages), Ananda Vacanamritam (16 parts: each part with 120 pages), Bangla O' Banga'li (520 pages), Laghu Nirukta (600 pages). He also wrote rare books on Comparative Philology and grammar such as Var'na Vijina'na (420 pages), Var'na Vicitra' (8 parts: each part with 220 pages-a rare series dealing with the peculiarities of each letter of Indo-Aryan alphabet) Shabda Cayaaika' (26 parts: each part with 220 pages). This marathon series is of encyclopedic nature dealing with words, in alphabetical order-words associated with different branches of human knowledge. Over and above all these, the Marga Guru found time to compose as many as 5,018 songs (popularly known as Prabh'ata Sam'giita composed in Bengali, Sanskrit, English, Urdu, Angika, Maithilii, Bhojpuri, etc. Strangely enough, The Rev. M.G. had to shoulder the great responsibility of running a vast world-organisation manned by a large number of Tattviks, Acaryas, Avadhutas and Purodhas, scattered in 181 countries. All these, He did systematically, slowly, steadily, and silently to the fullest satisfaction of all. **Can we cite any other example of Karma-Yoga better than this?**

Yet, in connection with this dictation I had the rare opportunity to go to Him for the last ten years. In 1983, the Rev. M.G. would give dictation on Var'na Viji'nana the treaties on the science of letters. There were two sessions for dictation every day, the first at about 11:30 AM on the roof-top' at His Lake Gardens residence. He used to pace up and down on the roof and give dictation on comparative philology.

The second session would begin at about 11 P.M. after BA'BA's night meal. Needless to say, sometimes the dictation was very long and fast-full of references relevant to the context He was giving dictation on Bengali philology. Incidentally, He would draw comparison from Samskrta, Hindi, English, Angika, Maithiili, Bhojpurii, Magahi, Nagpuria, Chattishgari, Avadhii, Bundelii, Baghelii, Harianavii, Mewarii, Maravari, Punjabi, Dogri, etc.

At times, He would also draw relevant comparison from Oriento-demi Latin (French and Italian), or occido-demi Latin (Spanish or Portuguese). My stock in trade of knowledge was a little Bengali and Samskrta and something of English and Hindi. **But the Rev. M.G. was giving dictation on comparative philology out of His vast knowledge of vocabulary from over two hundred languages and dialects of India and abroad. He would create any quote, the relevant rhymes, poems, lullabies, proverbs, phrases and idioms,**

etc. till point He raised was made crystal clear.

Sometimes, I found it impossible to keep pace with Him. His dictation was unusually fast and yet He won't excuse any mistake on my part. So, in spite of my extreme alertness, some mistakes would invariably creep in the fair copies-particularly in case of the Hindi quotes of poems. Later, when I would read out the fair copies of manuscripts to Him, He would correct my errors- not straightway but after a round of scolding.

In fact, I was awe-struck at His unfathomable knowledge. I wondered, how could a human brain be so much strong as to retain an inexhaustible source of knowledge covering all branches of human endeavor. Only the Macrocosmic mind could be the receptacle of such endless knowledge. Microcosmic brain is too weak to remember such a wide variety of knowledge.

In my student life I came in contact with many brilliant professors of colleges and universities. I had also contact with some erudite scholars poring into books like worms, yet I found those professors miserably wanting in intellectual profundity. When some brilliant Samskrta scholars are asked derivation of even some common words or when some English and Bengali professors are asked synonyms of a bit comparatively unknown words or some history professors are asked to furnish dates and years of some epoch-making-events, many immediately turn towards reference books. But how different was the case with BA'BA'!

Even during the last thirty years of my long association with Him, I never saw Him reading a single line from any book. In fact there was not a single book in any of His residences-and yet He would propound or expound His most brilliant thoughts and theories, that even the wisest of the scholars would shudder to think of. I have a feeling that ordinary intellectuals of our country could not evaluate the greatness of His personality, because of His extraordinary wisdom and multi-dimensional personality.

Usually people in general can form a general opinion about a person who is equal to him or slightly lower or higher than him during the life time. But, if a personality is an intellectual colossus, too high for their average intellect, they are sure to misunderstand or misjudge him. In fact, it takes years and years-sometimes even centuries to make a proper evaluation of such extraordinary genius! Once I had a discussion, during a lecture in the Nalanda University with Reverend Jagadish Kashyap, the then Vice-Chancellor of the university.

When I spoke at length on the various aspects of the Rev. Marga Guru's personality, Dr. Kashyap spoke out rather emphatically, "I see Swamiji, your Master is undoubtedly a versatile genius but unfortunately, such a genius is bound to be misunderstood by his contemporary fellowmen, because the usual practice is made, if one speaks of one subject at a time, people can understand; but if one speaks of many subjects at a time, people fail to understand them. They misunderstand and malign such persons. It is a tragic paradox. The same thing happened in case of Rev. Marga Guru".

The Rev. Marga Guru told me almost the same thing. It was the year 1982, BA'BA' was giving series of

discussion on Shivalogy. His exposition on Shiva's sayings and exhortations were unique, splendid and unprecedented. After the discussion was over I said, 'BA'BA', I am told that the people of Shiva's time were very undeveloped. How could they evaluate the grand, sublime and comprehensive philosophy of Shiva?" **BA'BA' replied forthwith, "What to speak of the contemporary people, it took one full thousand years for the people to realize the extraordinary genius of Shiva". Perhaps the inexorable law is that the great advents appear a bit ahead of their time. Hence they are recognized as great advent not during their lifetimes but after their departure.**

Yes, I was mentioning our dictation. **Recently there were some changes in BA'BA's daily routine. For instance, BA'BA' used to give His dictation before the breakfast and naturally He used to take His breakfast at 1.00 or 1:30 PM. On Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, BA'BA' used to give dictation and the remaining days of the week, He would utilize for organizational purposes; but I had to read out a couple of Samskrta words from a voluminous Samskrta English dictionary.**

BA'BA' would carefully listen to the derivation and meaning of the words. In most cases I would notice that the lexicographer had carefully avoided the derivation of many words. So far as the meaning of words is concerned, the readers would not be able to understand the exact meaning of words. **To remove this sort of vagueness, BA'BA' started the marathon series of Shabda Cayanika. He started explaining the derivation and meaning of many words in alphabetical order.**

BA'BA' started the marathon series with the letter ' a' (A) and ended up with the letter ' j ' (ga). I reserve my inclination to deal with the series with Encyclopedic nature.

It was Sunday. The Rev. M.G. would sit approximately an hour every Sunday at about 6 P.M. and discuss the science of comparative philology before the assembled Margiis.

BA'BA' asked me whether I have finished reading the dictionary; how far have we progressed. "The last word of our dictation was Grhamani" I said. He asked me what has the dictionary said about its meaning, "A lamp", I said.

BA'BA' said, "Is that enough only to say 'a lamp'? It may be a lamp inside a house. It may also mean a street-lamp, which helps the pedestrian to move. **If a dictionary gives the meaning of grhamani a street-lamp, what's the benefit of the readers. His imperfection in the sphere of knowledge remains as before; it shows that the dictionary must give out the derivation of the word. What are the root verbs and the suffixes added? Otherwise, why should people waste their-money to buy such voluminous dictionaries. Once, He asked me how many parts of Shabda**

Cayanika have so far been brought out. "Twenty six parts in all", I said. "How many parts in all are expected to be brought out?"

"Judging the progress of books, it seems it would take another ten years to complete the series".

BA'BA' said in a somewhat drawled articulation-ten years-such a long period! I wonder whether I would be able to complete the series. Hopefully other scholars will follow up the series. Incidentally, what about the letter 'j (ga)'? **How long will it continue?"**

'At least one year and a half, I suppose'-I said.

"Why? I have already given a dictation of over 1,500 pages on 'ga', and yet you say it will take another year and a half?"

BA'BA' said, "Let us stop all these. Tell me about some other thing".

During those days, BA'BA' made a rule that I should separately go to His room to convey good news to Him twice or thrice a day. He also made a rule that I should supply good news to Him everyday after Mantresvaranandaji, Public Relations Secretary comes out of His room. That was the latest arrangement.

I was a bit surprised with this new arrangement, because upto then, the Public Relations Secretary would collect and convey all the good news items of the organization. **In fact, BA'BA' used to gather all kinds of information mainly through four sources-the General Secretary would keep Him posted with the latest developments of the organization concerned with establishment, and ministration and supervision. The Public Relations Secretary would convey to Him good news items concerning public relations, volume of out-turn in terms of education, relief and welfare projects, Master units, land, meetings, etc. So far as I am concerned, I used to convey to Him news or good news regarding progress of publication, the impression of the enlightened readers about our ideology, the progress of translation of BA'BA's books in various major Indian and non-Indian languages.**

During the last days of my association with Him, I discovered one thing that, BA'BA' was interested in collecting information from me about our progress in Tripura, Orissa, South America, East Europe and Africa.

TRIPURA

BA'BA' always took a keen interest in the development of Tripura. He expressed His concern about undeveloped states of India and the world. During the last thirty years BA'BA' mentioned a number of times to me that the amount of natural resources in Tripura was not at all negligible, rather if all those resources were kept properly, He pointed out, there is no reason why the people of the state will not be economically solvent; but unfortunately, the leaders are quite callous, and consequently Tripura still continues to be a deficit state. That is why, whenever the Tripura Margiis would come to see BA'BA', He always conveyed important suggestions and guidelines for economic improvement of Tripura. Only a week before His great departure, He spoke to a group of Tripura Margiis and advised them to concentrate on those important items-

one: setting up schools up to the panchayat level after the Gurukula pattern,

two: establishment of Master Units with the greatest success on education, culture and small scale industries based on agriculture etc. Ananda Margiis and their friends had already set up Master Unit on

plots of land ranging from 5 acres to 20 acres as the case may be in five or six blocks already. BA'BA' was interested to know whether such welfare projects were being extended to other blocks or not. Incidentally, the Samgha has already created a special department to expand many more ideal Master Units in India and overseas countries. So far about 300 Master Units have already been started in different sectors of the world.

ORISSA

BA'BA' was equally interested in the development of Oriya language and culture. He wished to see that there should be a great renaissance in Oriya language through its revitalized grammar, philology, drama, play rights, encyclopedic documentation on enriched vocabulary, etc. and also building up of a theatrical stage. He conveyed His beautiful suggestions to an educated section of Orissa Margiis how to develop the Oriya language and culture. A group of young and energetic college and university teachers came to meet Him in Calcutta and ascertain His views as to how to move in that regard. As it stands now, things are moving well. Orissa is on the sure path to a big renaissance in near future. BA'BA' expressed His happiness at how things were going on in Orissa.

SOUTH AMERICA

Latin America is a big and great continent. The people there are simple, devotional and full of potentialities. But all the countries of the sector are economically backward. Political situation is not at all stable. Social and cultural life is not at all healthy. Rev. Marga Guru wanted to know from me whether our Mission in Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, Columbia, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, Peru, Chile, etc. is working vigorously for opening schools, homes of all kinds. (Orphanages, Delinquents' Homes), Medical clinics, and hospitals, Master Units, Seva Dais, Renaissance Universal Clubs, Renaissance Artists and Writers' Associations, Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team, Prout seminars and symposia, Prabhat Samgiita concerts, translation of Marg's books in Portugese and Spanish languages, etc. I used to convey to Him hundreds of news items of good work done by our Mission there.

AFRICA

BA'BA' was always interested to know what we are doing in African countries. In 1963 once I was sitting with Him at the Tigers' Grave at Jamalpur. BA'BA' was describing the political, economic and educational backwardness of various African countries. He said that if the speed of development is increased by 20 times, even then, it will take 20 years for Africa to catch up with the state of economic progress of developed world. He always advised the heads of our African Mission in 45 countries to concentrate on Education, Relief and Welfare activities-and they are doing excellent work in all the countries. I remember in one of the Reporting Sessions for African District Secretaries, He wanted to know from the Lusaka Federal District Secretary as to what he had done to ameliorate the economic condition of the Pygmies, Zulus, Bantus, etc. The District Secretary was the Chief reporter of the *Zambian Times*, a very influential daily in Africa. Since then Viirendra (his Sanskrit name) has been in touch with various governments with his well-thought-out plans and programs of development. Incidentally, an educated Maori youth was also present in that reporting session. BA'BA' asked, him whether he was doing enough for the undeveloped Maori Community in Australia and New Zealand.

EAST EUROPE

Similarly, BA'BA' was very much interested in our welfare projects in East European countries. The economic situation in Romania is very much volatile, the social and economic condition is equally bad. Children of 6 to 16 years of age are left in the government hostels. In Communist regimes, these Govt. homes were run by directors-most un-psychological and tyrannical-each one a veritable mini-cheapness. The hospitals are by and large ill-organized. The life-saving medicines and medical

appliances are in acute shortage. The academic atmosphere is equally disorganized. Primary education is hopelessly neglected. The economic situation in Poland is no better. The position of Czechoslovakia and East Germany is equally deplorable. We used to receive plenty of information from Eastern Block. Our workers of the Berlin Sector have been doing extensive welfare activities in all these countries. In Berlin, Munich, Warsaw, Prague, Bucharest, they are organizing seminars and symposia, ' cultural programmes, seminars on Neo-Humanism, Prout study forum in colleges and universities.

On the last 16th October, the Italian Prime Minister, in a joint session of the National Parliament of Italy awarded the medal of highest order to the world-famous Prout-economist, Dr. Ravi Batra in recognition of his outstanding contribution in the sphere of economics. Dr. Batra's views on Prout-economy were given wide coverage by T.V., radio and other news media. In France, he addressed a Press Conference, in Poland and Czechoslovakia he addressed a series of Prout seminars attended by the members of the National Planning Commission, senior executives of the banks, the secretaries and ministers of the Finance Department and the professors of economics, etc. All the news media gave due publicity to his views.

I conveyed all the news to BA'BA'. He expressed His satisfaction. ***He reminded me that He had been saying since first January 1990, that each successive year will bring 'glad tidings' for you. "The wind is blowing in your favour".*** I was more than an hour with Him. He recalled so many things, how the mission was started at Jamalpur from a scratch; but now the same mission has been a mighty one with branches and sub-branches throughout the world. ***Incidentally, He rather abruptly asked me, 'Do the Samgha workers know that I have trained them with the principle with which the delicious Bengali cakes (Puli pit'he, gokul pit'he) are made. You can not make such cakes on a large scale at a time, on the other hand you will have to devote special care and attention to make each and every cake. This is what I mean by man-making mission.*** If they have already understood it is good, but those who haven't yet understood, you should help them to do; because they too, should help the juniors grow in the same style.

He also asked me whether what he has said during the previous days was properly understood by those who were present in the after-noon reporting session of the 20th October '90.

Of late, BA'BA' was not sitting for reporting with the different categories of workers (wholetimers, local full timers, District Secretaries (Bhukti Pradhans), Block Secretaries (Upabhukti Pramukhs), Panchayat Pramukhs, etc.).

He left the matter to the General Secretary and other Departmental Secretaries who would conduct marathon sessions of reporting with their respective departmental workers. BA'BA' would sit occasionally with them and discuss topics of great spiritual and intellectual interest. On entering the reporting hall, BA'BA' would ask what particular topic was being discussed. I would immediately mention the topic. Then He would throw a couple of questions on the subject concerned and wait for someone among the assembled group to come forward and answer. In most cases our secretaries or LFT workers, WT's would find it difficult to gain satisfactory reply to BA'BA's queries.

On the 20th October, afternoon, BA'BA' entered the reporting hall and asked questions in His usual style. I said that topic being discussed was 'the dangers of fissiparous forces in our collective life'. BA'BA' pondered a little while and threw the question, 'Is the division of people into castes and communities natural balkanization or artificial balkanization"?

To make the question easier to understand, BA'BA' said, "Natural balkanization is just like one cell

becoming two, Artificial fissiparous tendencies are unnatural. So, is the division of people into caste and communities-a process of natural balkanization, or artificial fissiparous tendencies"?

Amongst the inimical forces, there are some parties which are goaded by certain forces and there are also some persons, goaded by fissiparous tendencies. How this problem can be solved? How can we check these belligerent parties from implementing their outdated ideas, which may cause physical disintegration of the country? What should be done? What should be the short-term and long-term 'policy'? The approach should be both physical and psychic. Will simply economic theory, or something more is required? Education is a long-term programme. What should be done immediately in the physical and psychic realm? The country is passing through a critical juncture".

Needless to say, this is the burning problem of India today. No one, present in the hall, could give a satisfactory reply to such critical question concerning the Indian national life. BA'BA' remained silent for a few moments. Then He said, slowly and distinctly, "The problem is indeed serious and complex.

There is a theory in politics called 'Divide and Rule'. Just to undermine the independence of India, the British Government started a systematic programme to encourage communal division amongst the people based on upper caste, scheduled caste, scheduled tribe, Muslims and non-Muslims. These were the various divisions. Our leaders should not have accepted such divisions. Rather at that time, they should have insisted that preference should be given on the basis of socio-economic backwardness, and not on the basis of caste or creed. Certain political parties were based on caste-prejudice or communal sentiment, which is why they supported the British Government".

Thus the British Government, with the tacit support of certain parties and the active connivance of great leaders introduced a set of reforms which caused incalculable damage to the unity and integrity of erstwhile India-such as Montague-Chelmsford Report, the Communal Award of Ramsay Macdonald and the Government of India Act, 1935.

BA'BA' continued to say, "As a result of the Communal Award the country was tri-furcated into Pakistan, India and Bangladesh (East Pakistan). This was the result of the blunder of Mahatma Gandhi and selfishness of other political leaders who wanted to become Minister, as there was scope in the Govt of India Act at that time for wresting provincial autonomy, ministership, creating two new provinces, Orissa and Sindh and separating Ceylon and Burma.

“Provincial Autonomy was promulgated in the year 1935, but it was implemented in 1937. In Sindh a particular party, a minority party of India was in the majority in the state. Orissa was created out of physical, rather than mental necessity. It was very difficult for the people of Orissa to go to the capital town Patna, as they had to go to Patna through Calcutta. This is why they demanded that either Orissa should be included in Bengal or there should be a separate province. The creation of Orissa was not bad, but the creation of Sindh was bad. These were the poisonous effects of Provincial Autonomy by the Govt of India in 1935".

..."Take the case of Bengal as an example of the communal approach of the Govt, of India. At that time, reservation in the Bengal Assembly was for 250 seats. Of these 250 seats, 120 were for the Muslims, 80 were for Non-Muslim, 25 for British Merchants-for the British Businessmen of Calcutta to contest election, a few were for Zamindars, a few were for universities and a few were for labor leaders. The total seats were 250. In Bengal at that time 55% of the population was Muslim and 45% non-Muslim That is, the land of Bengal was not only physically divided, but also mentally divided. As

a result of which Bengal was divided on the basis of communal consciousness, which is unnatural. Communalism is unnatural. Today again, the political leaders are encouraging this very sentiment. And I fear that, if it is not controlled at the proper time (It is the most opportune moment to control it), the country will face further disintegration."

"Factually, as per the Govt, of India Plan at the time, India was tri-furcated. Bengal was bi-furcated. The Punjab was bi-furcated, Assam was bi-furcated, Sindh and North-West Frontier Province went out of India. This was the result of Communal Award. And unfortunately, the great patriots of India (?) supported the Communal Award. They had not learnt the lessons of history."

"At that time there was no mutual faith, there was want of mutual understanding. That is why the country was divided, Otherwise, the British could not have divided the country. There was both physical disintegration and psychic or rather psycho-social disintegration for want of proper political education."

The native states were beyond the 1935 Award. This is the reason why the communal position of the native states were better than that of the rest of India. There was hardly any communalism in Kashmir. The Muslims lived under Hindu Raj. Similarly, the Hindu majority state of Hyderabad was under a Muslim leader and there was hardly any communalism. The reason was that the native states were free from the communal award. The British Communal Award was not applied there.

BA'BA' stopped a while and then recited a few lines from Tagore's poem:

' 'Naginira charidike phunsiteche Vis' akta Nihshva's Shantir lalit vani shunaibe Vyartha parihas Viday nebar age tai dak diye jai Danaversathe samgramertare Prastut hateche jara ghare ghare"

"Serpents are exhaling venom everywhere. Now at this critical juncture should we go on preaching the gospels of peace?"

"No, no, no~On the contrary, before my departure from the world I send out my clarion call to those who are preparing at every house to fight against these demons."

• What Ravindranath said sixty years ago, is also true in the last portion of this twentieth century.

BA'BA' asked whether those three hundred persons who were present in the hall during the 20th October, 1990 reporting sessions, have understood the spirit of what I have said.

I said in reply, "Yes, BA'BA'. They have understood fully".

BA'BA' said, "So you say, everything is going on well.

Alright, encourage one and all to work more. Tell the Margis and friends-the wind is blowing heavily in your favor".

I was preparing to leave the room. I did Sa's't'a'unga Prana'm to BA'BA'. He said: "Shubhamastu (May you be blessed)". I could hardly realize that this was going to be my last darshan of BA'BA' and last A'shiirv'ad' from Him.

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